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ONONDAGA SUPERSTITIONS.

HUNTING.

THE Onondagas, living as they do far from the resorts of large game, have abandoned the chase as a means of subsistence. Most of the young men know little of woodcraft, though some of middle age still visit, in the autumn, the wooded sections of the state (New York) to hunt. My brother and I were recently the companions of an Onondaga, of perhaps forty-five years, on one of these trips. He knew nothing of the particular region we had selected, but would start out unhesitatingly in any direction and pass a whole day in the woods without losing his way for an instant. Tracks in the leaves, browsed twigs, moss bitten from the roots or tree-trunks, signs or sounds of animal life, he seemed to notice immediately, and almost instinctively. I heard from him many superstitious sayings of the "old people" concerning hunting, most of which he believed implicitly. Among them are the following.

Tobacco smoked on hunting expeditions should be, by preference, Indian tobacco, *N. rustica*.

Fawns or partly grown deer notice the presence of the hunter more readily than adult animals, and warn the others. I am not prepared to say that there is not some truth in this.

It is bad to kill any animal of a species other than that hunted, as the animal so killed changes after death to a deer, or to an individual of whatever species the hunter is in search, and gives the alarm. I was told this one evening after killing a porcupine so quietly that the Indian, who was some fifty yards away, knew nothing of it until told. He said, besides, that porcupines are eaten and relished by the Indians.

Cheese should never be used by a hunting party, for deer scent it at a long distance.

Chewing spruce gum also diminishes the chances of success. A chief called Captain George once hunted for many days unsuccessfully. He had been chewing gum and was finally warned not to do so. Acting on this advice, he killed two deer on the following day, and afterwards a large bear.

It is commonly believed that the Indians, in years past, owed their success in hunting to the possession of charms or fetiches ("poison"), which when properly used exerted their influence against the lower animals, but if neglected or employed ignorantly, imperiled human life also. Such charms are supposed to be now in use at Onondaga, especially in trapping. A story told by a Seneca woman will explain this belief more fully. She said that an old man, a relative of

hers, was very fond of hunting, and used to go occasionally to the woods with a kettle containing some white beans and a white chicken. It was thought that he offered these as a feast to his hunting genius or spirit, as it was necessary to do this periodically in order to prevent its injuring human beings. He sometimes stayed two days and nights in the woods. After this old man's death, the children of his family began to die, one by one, of a strange malady, vomiting blood being one of the symptoms. Several times a spot of fresh blood was found in the attic, and an old woman told the family that they must all leave the house and destroy it, as the illness was caused by the old man's hunting fetich, which was undoubtedly hidden somewhere about the building, and which since his death had not been properly feasted. She also said that when the next child died, every one should go out and no one should stand near the bed, as the evil would then pass to any one who might be near. If it was necessary for some one to remain, it should be a person who was not of the family. When all but two of the children had died, the mother decided to leave the house, and upon its being pulled down, the fetich, wet with fresh blood, was found tucked above a rafter near the peak of the roof, directly above the spot where the blood had been seen on the floor. Upon examination, the charm was found to consist of a white bone from a large (supernatural?) snake, nicely wrapped with silk.

De Cost Smith.

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